



## Human Rights Commission Minutes

Date: Monday, April 1, 2024

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: 27 Maple Street, HHS Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Conducted by Hybrid (Remote and In-Person)

**\*Notice to the Public on meeting privacy\*** To prevent abuse of video conferencing technology (i.e., Zoom Bombing), all participants, including members of the public, wishing to engage via the Zoom App must register for each meeting and will notice multi-step authentication protocols. Please allow additional time to join the meeting. Further, members of the public who wish to participate without providing their names may still do so by registering to receive the meeting info and using the dial-in telephone information provided.

*On March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill that extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025. Specifically, this extension allows public bodies to continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body being physically present at a meeting location and to provide "adequate, alternative" access to remote meetings. The language does not make any substantive changes to the Open Meeting Law other than extending the expiration date of the temporary provisions regarding remote meetings from March 31, 2023, to March 31, 2025.*

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

Present: Co-chairs: Drake Pusey, Griffin Jones; Commissioners: Rajeev Soneja, Christine Carney, Kristen Bauer, Scott Jones, Sharon Grossman, Crystal Beauchemin, Kevin Bryant, Laurie Key, Gary Horowitz

Staff: Colleen Leger, Sadie Ford

Guests: Christina Ahmad, Beth Melofchik, Laura K., Carissa Englert, Aida Abujoub, Chadi Salomoun, Noble Larson, Kaspar Kaspasian, Sarah McKinnon, Dan Goguen, Kevin K., Tom Lemere, Mona Mandal, Kerry Abulonaf, Inssan Abukhohl, Poornima Manavalan, Sophie Spink, Joanna Poole, Daniel Fleig, Lina Smith

### Minutes

1. Introduction to the hybrid meeting. This meeting will not include a Community Input section. Drake Pusey notes the AHRC received 45 emails on this topic. Each vote in this meeting will be conducted by roll-call vote. Land acknowledgement.

2. Continued discussion of community input from March meeting and the tabled motion to co-sign Hingham statement
  - a. Why is this meeting happening: In the last meeting it was voted to table co-signing of the statement from the Hingham Commission of Human Rights. Also at the last meeting there was a lot of community input asking to have the AHRC release a statement calling for a ceasefire.

Co-chairs want to propose a course of action:

- As a commission at the January meeting we observed how insufficient statements often feel and how we want to have more of an impact.
- We would like to propose a combination of the input we got from the last meeting, and would like to pull the community together to have more conversations with the community and each other about what we can do.
- We want to show support; learn how impacted members of our community would like our community to react so we can ensure they feel supported and safe.
- We would like to propose to get community input on two specific questions.
  - What do you think the town can do?
  - What do impacted members of the community think that the other members of the town can do?
  - Series of 3 listening sessions before the next AHRC meeting, to maximize the people who can go, to give residents an opportunity to speak and be heard (over Zoom).
  - Would purely be an opportunity to hear the impact of this issue on the impacted members of our community.
  - We want to widen our imagination as to what we can do to help.
  - Within the boundaries of the public meeting law, there would be members of the AHRC who would be attending these meetings to take notes - added advantage is that the meetings would be unrecorded, which opens up accessibility.
    - Anyone can register/listen/speak, everyone will get an opportunity to speak at least once.
    - Speakers will also show each other mutual respect by not engaging with other speakers.
    - We propose to work on logistics immediately after the meeting, to have dates be released no later than the end of day tomorrow.
  - Purpose of these meetings would be to gather as much information as possible so at the next meeting we can take that information to create a plan of action.
  - Hearing from everyone will hopefully benefit participants by learning from each other.
  - The goal is to create a space where a lot of people can hear from a lot of other people.
  - One meeting at each time slot, evening, workday, and weekend should offer the most time for people to learn.
- This meeting is a resumption of the last meeting and a discussion about the Hingham statement, the co-chairs would like to continue postponing the discussion about the Hingham statement and releasing a statement calling for the ceasefire till the wider meeting.
  - The goal of this is so that it is the community's proclamation, not just the town.

Floor is open to discussion

- Commissioner Soneja: We should still discuss the Hingham statement because it is already out there and we need to look at what our options are in regard to cosign. It's

fantastic to learn the information that we can from the listening sessions, but we should also talk about the Hingham statement.

- Commissioner Pusey: There are two options for the statement, we can vote to co-sign at this meeting, or vote to table it.
- Commissioner Bauer: It would make more sense to table the Hingham statement until we can talk with the community to hear about their feelings on statements,
- Commissioner Grossman: an additional way from hearing from people is email, but also because we have already outlined questions, we could do a google form so people can have that form of providing input.
  - Commissioner Pusey: there is a write-in option so the commissioners who can't go to the listening sessions can compile those and learn their information. It's not about quantity, it is about the different perspectives and details from the letters that is really important, we can't discount the impact of writing instead of speaking.
- Commissioner Bauer: Is it going to go out to the town through their email?
- Commissioner G. Jones: We are not going to put it on the town calendar, but are thinking about pushing it on all of the social media channels.
- Commissioner Bauer: If DEI has an event, it isn't a town meeting and it can be put on the town calendar.
- Commissioner Grossman: We should push it through our own personal channels.
- Commissioner Soneja: Is there already a draft of what will go out to the town to inform them?
- Commissioner Pusey: Jill has started a draft, the main point of it is an invitation to the town, it will be promoted as much as we can achieve, from personal channels, interfaith communities, and other places. People who register for the Zoom will receive the ground rules and an orientation.
- Commissioner Bauer; how long are we willing to run each session for, and can we give people a time limit for them to talk.
- Commissioner Pusey: the average we are going for is 3 minutes, aiming for a two hour meeting, and then dividing on how much we can speak.
- Commissioner G. Jones: at the moment most of the directions will be included in the registration. We are trying to drive people to answer the two questions, what is the impact and how we the AHRC and the community should respond.
- Commissioner Bauer: Has anyone been in touch with the select board? - Answer: yes.
- Commissioner Carney: this has been going on for six months now, and it feels like the HRC is always behind, we have to recognize that people are going to be disappointed that we didn't come to a decision about calling for a ceasefire and the Hingham statement.
- Commissioner Bauer: If we vote on tabling this discussion to the next meeting, we have the ability to vote on making these two questions the only things on the agenda for next meeting.
- A version of the registration form will detail what information we have received from the community and why we are doing it.
- The timeliness is the cost of doing this recommendation but the benefit is we will have a broader idea of what's happening, a broader idea of reasons for the doing it
- Commissioner Beauchemin: stronger back up for the reasoning for the proclamation and would know why anyone is against it.
- Commissioner Bryant: It sounds like it is a good idea to get more response from the community.
- Because it is a part of response to the tragic events, co-chairs will be reaching out to

people about the 3 listening events, and we don't need a motion to go ahead with the listening statements.

- If people wanted to take action on a ceasefire proclamation tonight we would need a motion to go ahead with that.
  - Commissioner Soneja: One last pitch to go ahead with the Hingham statement right now, and table other issue. So many communities have reached out to the HRC to talk about how voices that aren't typically included in these conversations about themselves and conflicts that are impacting them. This statement is essentially just there to help us recognize their humanity. We need to be thinking about how it was a specific ask of the council, and how we need to consider it in itself. The Hingham commission has voted to pass it but they are waiting to launch it till they get consignees.
    - In regards to the Hingham statement doesn't have a problem do we want to do everything at once, or do one part nine days ahead of the other.
    - Commissioner Bauer: wants to hear from Arlington about their thoughts on signing.
    - MAHRC is considering creating a statement on behalf of the MHRC, but until that happens, the individual HRCs in Massachusetts are being asked to support this statement.
    - Don't want to sign on other people's work as our own words, we don't want to give the illusion that we are doing something that we are not.
    - Commissioner Soneja: Has discussed this issue with the author of the statement, we could sign with an addendum, or write our own statement if we don't agree with an aspect of it, but it would be preferred to sign on as we support it.
    - Commissioner Pusey: On the ceasefire proclamation, it's weighing the good that we can do over there (in Gaza) which is small, weighing it against the good of it in the community, wants to understand a broader view of what the impact to the community will be and so we can build a stronger statement.
  - Motion to make all decisions related to the Hingham statement, at the next meeting in nine days: Commissioner Bauer made the motion. Commissioner Horowitz seconds.
    - Passes with 10 yeses and 1 no (Commissioner Soneja).
  - Next item is adjourn meeting and through email will report about the next steps, Jillian Harvey will help set up all of the Zooms for the three Zoom listening sessions, we will manage that time as best we can, on April 10th we will be mainly discussing the information from the three listening sessions.
  - The meetings we will be aiming for Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Saturday is the town election)
3. Adjournment
- a. Commissioner Horowitz moves to adjourn, Commissioner Scott seconds, unanimous vote to adjourn.

**Next meeting:** (Moved to second Wednesday) Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 8:00 PM Hybrid

Anyone needing accessibility information or assistance to attend this meeting should contact Tim Ross at [tross@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:tross@town.arlington.ma.us). This meeting is open to all interested individuals.